

Tale Feathers

February
2008

Volume 75
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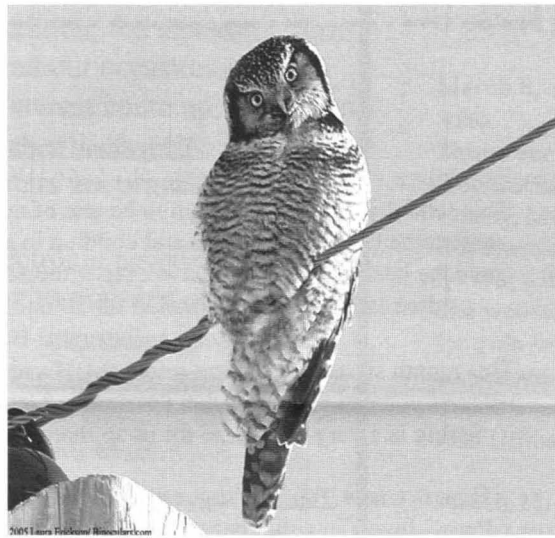
Important
Announcement
regarding our
newsletter

....and MORE!!

Be sure to visit our
website to
get any new info
after publication.

Uncommon Facts About Common Birds by *Laura Erickson—Author and Radio Show Host*

February Joint Meeting with WGNSS



Mark your calendar for Friday, February 8 at 7:00 p.m. at the Creve Coeur Community Center.

Laura Erickson is the producer and host of the radio show "For the Birds" out of Duluth, MN and has been doing so since 1986. She is the author or co-author of four books on birds, including *101 Ways to Help Birds*, *For the Birds: An Uncommon Guide* and *Sharing the Wonder of Birds with Kids*. Laura has also been a contributor to *Birder's World*, *Audubon* and *Birding*. She has received the

Frances F. Roberts Award from the Cooper and Wilson Ornithological Societies in 1991, the National Outdoor Book Award in 1997 and was recognized in 2007 by the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology for her "significant contributions to Wisconsin ornithology."

Laura will discuss many of the common birds found in our backyards around St. Louis, including the white-throated sparrow, chickadee, mockingbird and others. You will be amazed at what you don't know about these birds—from dominance hierarchies in the chickadee to strange mating patterns in the white-throat and of course that huge song repertoire of the mockingbird.

This is our annual joint meeting with the Webster Groves Nature Study Society, so you will have twice the people to meet and twice the opportunities to discover. The meeting is open to all, members or not.

From I-270 and Ladue, go east on Ladue, left at the light at New Ballas, go ¼ mile north to the Creve Coeur Government Center at 300 N. New Ballas. Community Center is in the northwest corner of the lower level (closest to Olive and Ballas).

Questions, call Mitch Leachman at 314-739-5112.

St. Louis Audubon Society

Opportunities

and

Announcements

Mission Statement
of
The St. Louis
Audubon Society

Help our community
sustain biological
Diversity through
Nature.

Goals
To foster an aware-
ness and under-
standing
of birds and other
wildlife and their
habitats

To educate our com-
munity so people
can make
informed decisions
about the natural
world.

AUDUBON SOCIETY LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEERS

The St. Louis Audubon Society announces a training class that is starting up for their speaker's bureau in their elementary education program. The speakers will be available free to schools and will cover topics ranging from birds to bats to plants.

"We are truly excited about this program. Environmental education is a big part of what Audubon is all about and what better place to start than at the elementary level," said local chapter president, Torrey Berger.

St. Louis Audubon Society, with 2800 members, has a local focus on education, conservation and habitat restoration. It annually participates in Operation Clean Stream, conducts monthly general interest meetings, bird walks and song and shore bird habitat reclamation and restoration.

Call Vicki Flier for applications or more information at 314-968-9166.

Education Team Report

This school year has started out to be one of our best. So far we have educated and entertained over 1000 adults and children in a variety of programs. Bobbie Poor gave the best squirrel talk I have ever witnessed. She kept over 40 adults and children laughing and enthralled for 30 minutes about the feisty little guys.

This month starts our training sessions. If you are interested but missed our training call and you can get on-the-job training and monthly updates at our Friday meetings. Spring is a very busy time for us so there will be a lot of opportunities to learn.

Here is a new **Top Ten** suggestion to help the environment submitted by Bobbie Poor. Invest in a thermal cup and fill it with good old pure and cheap tap water. Companies that bottle water are depleting our aquifers and this water is seldom if ever returned to its original watershed. The plastic bottles, for store bought water, require petroleum for the manufacture and the empties add to the landfills.
(Well, not this audience.)

Conservation Update

On December 19 President Bush did sign into law a new energy legislation that will increase new vehicles' fuel economy and help reduce oil dependency. Kudos to all of you who helped with this effort by contacting your government officials. Our National Audubon representative stated that "While it is not as strong as any of us would have liked, it's a very important and even historic first step in our fight against global warming."

If you are a Missouri resident, The Missouri Department of Natural Resources would like you to take an online survey about wetlands. To express your support of these areas that provide wildlife habitat, cleanse our waterways and store flood waters, please visit <http://www.dnr.mo.gov/env/wrc/survey.htm>.

Karen B. Meyer
Vice President of Conservation

Talefeathers **Newsletter going Electronic** **Second Notice**

The St. Louis Audubon Society has decided to join many other organizations and move to electronic newsletters. This move will take place in mid-2008 at which time we will discontinue the full distribution of the printed *Talefeathers* as you have known it. We are doing this to save cost, the volunteer time involved in putting out the paper version and the uncertainty of the scheduling of the printing company and postal services. This should avoid the problem that we have had of newsletters arriving at your homes after an announced event has already been held. In addition, the electronic form will give us the flexibility to send out occasional short newsletters when items of special interest come up. From an environmental standpoint this switch will also save the paper on which 2500+ newsletters are printed.

In order for you to receive your electronic newsletter we will need your e-mail address. As soon as possible send your e-mail address to Sue Gustafson at smgustafson@juno.com.

Please include your regular mailing address and zip code for cross checking purposes. Sue will compile the addresses into an updateable data base.

We will mail a limited number of paper newsletters to any of our members who do not have e-mail access. This may be a much simplified version of our current *Talefeathers*. If you do not have an e-mail address and still wish to receive the newsletter you must mail a note to our post office box P.O. Box 220227, St. Louis, MO 63122.

Failure to send either your e-mail address or a specific request for continuation of a paper newsletter will result in your not receiving any newsletter. However, we will mail out the annual calendar to all of our members in August of each year. Included will be instructions for putting your e-mail address into the data base and/or requesting the paper version of *Talefeathers*.

February and March Birding Trips

Pat Lueders

February 16, Saturday, 1:00 pm——Baldwin Lake & Peabody Coal

Our SLAS president, Torrey Berger, will be leading this very popular trip. We will meet at Baldwin Lake in Baldwin, IL, an unusual warm lake in winter, a result of the Ameren-UE Power Plant residue. Last year, a Black-legged Kittiwake was seen at the lake as well as other gulls, terns, and numerous ducks. We will then bird the Peabody Coal reclamation area near Baldwin Lake. At dusk, we hope to see the Short-eared Owls beginning hunting. Last year, over 37 owls were seen roosting at Peabody. Bring your cameras to capture this awesome spectacle of nature.

March 8, Saturday——5:00 pm, Busch Conservation Area

This is our annual evening session to see American Woodcocks display at Busch Conservation Area, St. Charles County, MO. We will also attempt to find owls in the area. It is always cold, especially at sunset, so please dress warmly! We will meet as usual at the Hampton Lake parking lot. The woodcocks display till dark, and we will probably look for owls for an hour or two after sunset. All levels of birders are welcome, and younger birders really enjoy this trip. You can come for both events or leave when you want. Josh Uffman will be our leader for the evening.

March 22, Saturday——8:00 am, Horseshoe Lake, IL and RMBS

Paul Bauer will lead this trip through Horseshoe Lake and RMBS. He will be looking for ducks, shorebirds, unusual gulls, and early spring migrants at both locations. Come for part or all of the day. Weather at this time of the year changes and is especially cool by the lakes, so dress for all temperatures. There will be a chance to stop for lunch at a fast food place, or bring your own.

April 2, Wednesday——8:00 am, Columbia Bottom Conservation Area

Pat Lueders will be leading this Wednesday trip, and we will be visiting one of our newer areas that have a variety of habitat and birds. We will meet at the new headquarters building at the entrance to the area. Depending on the weather, we will do some walking in the wooded areas. We will be hoping to find some early migrants, shorebirds, ducks, and gulls. Again, dress for all weather possibilities and wear comfortable walking shoes. Bring your lunch and we will picnic, again weather permitting. We should start for home around 3:00 pm.

Lichens of Missouri You Will be Amazed!!

March Joint Program with the Sierra Club

Mark your calendar for Thursday, March 27 at 6:45 p.m. at Schlafly Branch of St. Louis Public Library at 225 N. Euclid between Lindell & Maryland (please note the **TIME**)

With over 400 species in Missouri, lichens are all around us during our woodland hikes or birding trips. Yet, we too often pass them by for the more charismatic birds, mammals or butterflies. Having been referred to as “fungi that have discovered agriculture,” lichens are composite, symbiotic organisms with representatives of at least two kingdoms. The dominant fungus partner, incapable of making its own food, cultivates either an algae or a cyanobacteria that manufactures food by photosynthesis. Extremely slow growing and able to shut down metabolically during periods of environmental extremes, lichens have been estimated to be among the oldest living organisms.

The true beauty of lichens is discovered by those willing to slow down and take a closer look. Collectively, lichens are an important element in the biological diversity of Missouri natural areas and provide distinctive character to the same. Lichens also provide a benefit for wildlife. Flying squirrels and at least nine species of Missouri birds are known to use lichens as nesting materials. Further, the sensitivity of lichens to environmental quality has led to a growing interest in them and their populations as an indicator of overall ecosystem health. Join David Bruns for a revealing presentation and discussion about lichens as an integral, if often overlooked, component of the Missouri landscape. He will focus on observing, identifying and appreciating Missouri lichens in their habitats.

David Bruns is currently a Conservation Education Consultant for the Missouri Department of Conservation. He received his B.A. in Environmental Education from Northland College and his Masters in Environmental Studies from Montclair State University. David has taught for many organizations including the National Wildlife Federation, the National Audubon Society and the Missouri Botanical Garden. David has been studying lichens in Missouri for over 10 years and has collected and cataloged almost 100 species of lichen at Rockwoods Reservation, including one species new to Missouri. He has presented lichen education workshops for teachers and written a resource for high school level lichen ecology studies on school grounds.

This program continues a successful tradition of partnership between St. Louis Audubon and the Eastern Missouri Group of the Sierra Club. That means you will have twice the people to meet and twice the opportunities to discover. The meeting is open to all, members or not.

The Schlafly Branch of St. Louis Public Library is at 225 N. Euclid, just 1 block from the Northeast corner of Forest Park. There is a parking garage in the Library building AND (for you walkers) the Central West End MetroLink stop is just one-half mile south.

Questions, call Leslie Lihou at 314-726-2140.



ST. LOUIS AUDUBON SOCIETY
ANNUAL AWARDS DINNER

Friday, April 11th

Jeffrey Wells, Ph.D., Senior Scientist for the Boreal Songbird Initiative

We are pleased to announce our 2008 Annual Awards Dinner will be hosted by Orlando Gardens at 4300 Hoffmeister Avenue in Lemay. Awards will be presented for Conservationist of the Year, Educator of the Year and Volunteer of the Year. The evening will conclude with a talk from our keynote speaker, Jeffrey Wells, Ph.D., Senior Scientist for the International Boreal Conservation Campaign and Boreal Songbird Initiative.

Recently, you may have read about the Society's efforts to assist with conservation work in Central America aimed at the wintering grounds of migrating birds that we observe in Missouri. This is critically important as some 255 species of songbird migrate *from North to Central or South America*. Further, only a very small percentage of these neotropical migrants that we observe in Missouri actually breed in the state. Many of them only *pass through* in the Spring and Fall to/from their nesting grounds far to the north—largely including the Boreal Forest. Please see the separate article in this issue providing an introduction to the Boreal and birds.

Dr. Wells, author of the *Birder's Conservation Handbook: 100 North American Birds at Risk* from Princeton University Press in 2007, will deliver the keynote address on the state of birds and bird conservation in North America. His wide-ranging presentation will cover everything from global warming to lingerie, Kleenex, donut holes, and the Argentinean economy. Dr. Wells will offer his secrets of bird conservation and describe some amazing opportunities that still exist including protection of the Boreal Forest—North America's Great Bird Nursery.

We have posted additional information about the Boreal Forest and Songbird Initiative on our website.

We hope you share our excitement about spending an evening with Dr. Jeffrey Wells and learning of the daunting challenges but exciting opportunities for conservation of North America's birds. Please bring your checkbook as we will provide a number of creative ways for you to personally contribute.

6:00 p.m.—Business Meeting

6:30 p.m.—Open Bar Begins Service

7:00 p.m.—Dinner Service

The business meeting is open to all, but only current SLAS members will be allowed to vote in the election of the Board of Directors. Feel free to skip the business portion and arrive during the social hour that starts at 6:30 p.m.

The cost is just \$25 per person. Reservations are required—please use the form below.

Space is limited, so please register by April 1st to insure you can enjoy this wonderful evening!

Orlando Gardens is at 4300 Hoffmeister Ave. in Lemay, just off I-55 south of the St. Louis City Line. Take I-55 Exit 199, Reavis Barracks Rd, East 0.1 mile to Union. Turn Left on Union and drive 0.6 mile to Hoffmeister Avenue. Turn right on Hoffmeister for 0.3 mile to Orlando's.

Annual Dinner Registration Form

By April 1st, please mail this form or a copy with payment to:

Mitch Leachman, 2728 Lakeport Drive, Maryland Heights, MO 63043

Make checks payable to **St. Louis Audubon Society**.

Name(s)

\$25.00 x _____ = _____
Fee No. Total Enclosed

Where Missouri Migrants Winter – Pico Bonito National Park, Honduras

A couple of months ago we told you about the effort of the Missouri Conservation Department and a consortium of organizations within Missouri to support the survival of Missouri migrant birds on their wintering grounds. In this issue we highlight the area of most interest to MDC at present, Pico Bonito National Park in Honduras, which is in the middle of the most important winter habitat for our migrant birds. The information below was provided by Brad Jacobs of MDC.

Pico Bonito National Park is located on the north coast of Honduras and is the second largest national park in the country, covering an area of 667 square miles and ranging from near sea level to 8,000 feet. It is one of the most diverse and biologically important national parks in Mesoamerica. Its unique combination of lowland to mountain life-zones, encompassing humid to dry forest ecosystems with pine, broadleaf and xerophytic habitats on north and south facing slopes along the Caribbean coast, has resulted in an exceptional diversity of birds (over 275 species) and biodiversity in general.

The park is a crucial oasis for migratory birds, both as over-wintering habitat and as a stop-over area for transient migrants on route to South America and most importantly in early spring for returning migrants from South America that stage in northern Honduras to recuperate before making a final flight to the breeding grounds (versus a direct trans-Caribbean return that would sap vital energy for courtship and breeding). A total of 67 Neo-tropical land-bird migrants, including 13 Green List and 11 BCC priority species are regularly recorded in the park. One area suggests a high spring concentration of Cerulean Warblers.

The park is an oasis in an otherwise largely deforested arid coastal region of Honduras. Pico Bonito National Park and last remnants of natural habitat in its buffer area are facing rapid degradation and destruction. As is typical of many Central American parks it is under constant threat from an advancing agricultural frontier, increasing forest fires, expanded cattle raising, and illegal trafficking in flora and fauna, etc.

Pico Bonito National Park suffers from limited funds for management and protection and urgently requires conservation attention. MDC has worked with other NGOs in the area to establish an objective to protect 6,423 acres to connect key migratory bird habitat between the National Park and the nearby dry forest reserve "El Poligono" and to establish a Migratory Bird Corridor between the two.

The specific activities will involve the following:

- Incorporate maps, property boundaries and aerial images between Pico Bonito National Park and El Poligono with GIS to evaluate key areas to acquire.
- Acquire approximately 3,953 acres at \$21 acre to connect between Pico Bonito National Park and El Poligono to establish the Migratory Bird Corridor covering three habitats (broadleaf-pine-dry forest).
- Extend the Pico Bonito National Park boundaries to include the Migratory Bird Corridor and El Poligono to add additional protection for the Poligono and to incorporate 2964 acres of dry forest habitat within the park.
- Acquire 2,470 acres of agricultural land at \$183 acre. Key watersheds beside the park that have been degraded, yet that are important as water catchments for downstream communities, will be purchased and reforested. The reforested areas will render vital environmental services, and stabilize vulnerable landscapes, improve soil conservation, and rebuild top soils. Selected forested lands that face significant threats of deforestation by local communities for agriculture will also be purchased to prevent deforestation and increase the undisturbed area within the park's buffer zone, contributing to improvement in biodiversity protection.

Special Presentation on Missouri Migrants in Winter

In conjunction with the MDC effort to help preserve the wintering habitat of Missouri's migrant birds, the St. Louis International Conservation Committee has arranged to have presentation of the work at Pico Bonito National Park, in Honduras, on Friday, February 29, 2008. This meeting will be at 7:30 PM at Powder Valley Nature Center, off Geyer Rd near I-44.

The speakers will be Paul Salaman of the American Bird Conservancy and Fito Steiner of Fundacion Parque Nacional Pico Bonito or FUPNAPIB, the nongovernmental organization (NGO) guiding the Pico Bonito project in Honduras. They will discuss the important work that is going on to expand and protect this very important wintering area for our migrant birds.

In addition to the speakers we will have a display of high quality archival, frangible, ink jet (giclee type from the old days) prints that MDC uses for reproducing the prints that they sell. These prints are from original paintings that MDC uses in its book. These will be available for order via donations of \$25-100 toward the work at Pico Bonito.

They are very high quality.

In conjunction with this visit Brad Jacobs will be conducting a field trip for the visitors and interested St. Louis birders, probably at Riverlands.

Contact John Solodar if you are interested in attending
(Solodar@sbcglobal.net).

We have received donations and pledges totaling more than \$2000 for the Pico Bonito project. If you wish to donate please send your contributions to John Solodar, 8135 Cornell Court, St. Louis, MO, 63130. Contributions are being funneled through the St. Louis Audubon treasury so please make checks out to St. Louis Audubon Society with an indication that the money is for International Conservation.

Walks in Forest Park

St. Louis Audubon Society Board Members, Lynne Breakstone and Jim Wilson, will continue to lead beginning walks or programs on the first Saturday of every month. The Education and Visitor's Center is located at 5595 Grand Drive, near the History Museum in Forest park.

On February 2, 1-3 pm, our speaker will be Carol Kershner, director of Wild Bird Rehabilitation. She will talk about the perils of urban birds and trends in the bird population in St. Louis.

The next program will be March 1, 1-3 pm and the topic will be the Best Birding Spots in the St. Louis area. If weather permits, we will go on a short bird walk in the park.

On April 5, 8:30-10:30 am, we will return to the walk in the park format.

For all of these wonderful opportunities, please contact Anne Grossmann at (314) 367-7275, ext 14 or email to agrossmann@forestparkforever.org.

Tale Feathers

Tale Feathers is published monthly by the St. Louis Audubon Society. Messenger Printing prints 2,400 copies of each newsletter on recycled paper using soy ink. Mary Dueren edits the newsletter. To contact the editor, call evenings to 314-576-1473 or email: mdueren@charter.net.

St. Louis Audubon Society 2007 - 2008

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ST. LOUIS AUDUBON SOCIETY

St. Louis Chapter ONLY Membership Application

By using this Application, your membership dues will go directly to the St. Louis Audubon Society Chapter. Your membership dues will support local issues that are important to you, programs at our general meetings, and *Tale Feathers*, our newsletter.

Chapter Only Dues are \$15.00 per year and cover all members living at the same address.

Please complete the form, enclose a check payable to SLAS, and mail to:
St. Louis Audubon Society, P.O. Box 220227, Kirkwood, Missouri 63122.

PLEASE PRINT

Circle One. NEW RENEWAL

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

E-mail (optional): _____

Note: Do Not Use This Form to Join or Renew Membership in the National Audubon Society.
To join National and receive the National Audubon Magazine (as well as Tale Feathers),
please contact www.audubon.org for an additional application.